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Final Testimony Is Heard in Suit To Limit Domestic Surveillance

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CHICAGO, Feb. 13 — A Federal district judge heard testimony today on a proposed settlement of a suit that could provide more stringent guidelines for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Domestic operations of the Central Intelligence Agency are also covered.

As a result of suits filed against the bureau and the intelligence agency in 1974 and 1975, both sides have reached an agreement that would limit spying activities and make it easier for a citizen or a group of citizens to sue the Government for infringement of rights guaranteed by the First Amendment.

The guidelines were approved in late December by the C.I.A., the F.B.I. and the plaintiffs, which include the American Civil Liberties Union and the Alliance to End Repression. To make the agreement binding, Judge Susan Getzendanner, who is presiding in the case, would have to sign it.

Charles Cruse, an attorney for the Department of Justice, said both sides made concessions but that the agreement was "fair and reasonable."

Not an Admission of Guilt

He also said the agreement "is in no way an admission that the F.B.I. did anything illegal."

Both sides agreed to the guidelines instead of entering a potentially long and expensive civil suit.

Judge Getzendanner took the case under advisement after the defendants and plaintiffs urged her to approve the agreement. A decision is expected in a few weeks.

The main points of the guidelines are these:

¶The F.B.I. may not conduct an investigation unless there is strong suspicion of criminal activity, prohibiting random spying on groups and individuals.

¶The bureau may not defame the character of or interfere with the political activities of American citizens.

¶The bureau must make a minimum amount of intrusion while conducting an investigation and will collect only information pertinent to an investigation of criminal activity.

If approved by Judge Getzendanner, the guidelines could help put an end to the bureau's alleged practice of compiling large dossiers on groups or people deemed to be subversive.

Guidelines in New York

Technically, the agreement applies only to activities in Chicago because it was filed here. But it would set a precedent for establishing similar guidelines in other cities and states.

The New York City Police Department agreed last December to create a three-member board to oversee police intelligence-gathering and surveillance activities involving political groups and activists. A formal set of written guidelines to protect First Amendment rights was also mandated by the New York settlement.

The Chicago agreement would, for the first time, give substantial legal recourse to those who believe that the bureau's agents have harassed them or have engaged in illegal break-ins to obtain information. Because of binding legal rights under the agreement, plaintiffs in such suits would have easier access to F.B.I. files than they now have.